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THE CHURCH AND THE WESLEYANS.

BY J. K.

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Wesley was a devoted admirer of the Church of England, of which he was an ordained priest, and from which, through his college fellowship, he derived his support while he pursued his early itinerant labours. He declared, and with undoubted sincerity, that his object was not to draw the people from the Church, but to make them better Churchmen. Afterwards, when from circumstances, which he has related with great simplicity and candour, he had become the leader of a sect, this made no change in his principles. He still impressed his societies with the duty, and even necessity, not merely of maintaining friendly dispositions towards the Church, but also of attending on her ministrations, and regarding Methodism only as an auxiliary. "When we forsake the Church," he said, "God will forsake us."—*Osler's Church and King.*

"They that are enemies to the Church are enemies to me"—"I will rather lose twenty societies than separate from the Church."—"You cannot be too watchful against evil speaking, or too zealous for the poor Church of England."—*John Wesley*

Our argument is, that it is because the Church of England is established by law, that she is able to provide a much larger amount of religious instruction for the nation at large than she possibly could do were she subverted as an Establishment.—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine. April,* 1834.

I should wish to state, that we consider ourselves as a branch of the Church of England, both at home and abroad.—*Rev. Robert Alder, Wesleyan Missionary in Canada.*

The Church of England is a self-reforming Church. It possesses within itself a principle of vitality, always strong enough to preserve it from utter spiritual corruption; and that principle is the Word of God which, Sunday after Sunday, is read from the pulpits of our Establishment,—which pervades every line of our "incomparable" Liturgy,—and which seasons with salt that can never lose its savour, our theological literature, "the richest," as a Wesleyan declares,

"that any section of the Church of Christ ever produced." In the history of the Church we shall find that there have been seasons when this principle lay, like grain during winter, inert and unquickened in the earth; but anon a zeal, borrowing its light and warmth from Gospel rays, has penetrated the frozen bosom of the soil, and awakened into life and productiveness the seed which was not dead, but only slept. This was most signally exemplified at the period when John Wesley first commenced that religious career, which was destined to produce such a wonderful and salutary influence on the Christian world. In the early part of the last century a Laodicean lukewarmness had infected the Church of England, and the pernicious growth of the Arian heresy, in addition to the evil under which the Establishment laboured, had almost choked the christianity of dissent. At this crisis, remarks the *Christian Observer*, "from the bosom of the Church of England went out that flame which has warmed and enlightened every other religious denomination." Then, within our own hallowed precincts, arose Venn, and Grimshaw, Romaine, and Talbot, Walker, Adam, and Conyers,—a body of spiritual labourers, strongly imbued with evangelical views. Then, above all, arose John Wesley, the son of a clergyman, himself a clergyman, and the fellow of a College. Then also Whitfield received his commission to preach, from an Episcopal successor of the Apostles; and quickly following these faithful servants of the Gospel, is to be seen a long array of the Established Clergy inculcating those particular views usually denominated evangelical. Thus did the Church of England, under Providence, reform itself by its own intrinsic means, and through the agency of its own duly authorised Priesthood.

Of all those holy men whom I have just enumerated, the one who had the greatest share in quickening the spiritual deadness that pervaded the land, was, undoubtedly, John Wesley. The consistent and order-loving Churchman can-

not but regret the assumption of the power of ordaining ministers and the aberrations from ecclesiastical discipline, into which this extraordinary man was led; he cannot but lament that Mr. Walker's advice to another person,—"Whatever good you design to do, do it in the Church,"—had not been more generally present to the mind of Wesley; but, with all these drawbacks, he, as well as every other Christian, must hold the name of the founder of Methodism in affectionate remembrance and veneration, so long as zeal, eloquence, charity, faith, and good works, combined, provoke the love and admiration of mankind. In a great degree also will disappear, the natural prejudice which the conscientious Churchman may entertain against John Wesley on account of his irregularities in discipline, when, from the commencement to the end of his protracted course, he is found accounting it his "peculiar glory", not to separate from the Church,—and reiterating to his followers, "Be Church of England men still!"

The members of the Church of England are too prone to confound Methodism with Dissent, and to put Methodists upon a level with Independents, Baptists, and other sectarians, who mar the Christian unity of the land. But this is an error which cannot be too speedily corrected, both with regard to the peace of the Church, and out of justice to the Methodists themselves; who, with Adam Clarke, repudiate the name and the principles of Dissenters, and "hold the doctrines, venerate the authority, and use the religious service" of the Establishment. So far from Methodism being designed by its founder to supersede the ministrations of the Church, its main object was to supply its wants,—to be a sort of outer court to the great national sanctuary,—to "stand a wall of fire" around the citadel of the Reformation. Wesley considered his system not as an excrescence, but as a healthy offshoot from the parent stem. He believed that the root of Methodism lay in the Church. As the fig-tree,

—— not that kind for fruit renown'd,
But such as at this day, to Indians known,
In Malabar or Decan spreads her arms
Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
The bended twigs take root, *and daughters grow*
About the mother tree, a pillar'd shade
High over-arched, and echoing walks between,—

as that tree stands in relation to its surrounding progeny, so stands the Church to Methodism. The Church is the *mother*, the centre of vegetation,—Methodism is the *daughter*, the offshoot, possessing, it is true, a root of its own, but deriving the nutriment of that root from its parent, and incapable of flourishing or even living independent of it. Destroy the monarch tree, and its subject thickets are involved in the destruction. Thus thought John Wesley, and on this principle did he act. In a paper read to the Conference in 1769, he exclaims,—"Let us keep to the Church. Over and above all the reasons", (meaning the higher ones of principle and Christian obligation,) "we add another now," (one of policy and self-preservation,) "from long experience; they that leave the Church, leave the Methodists." His Journal is thickly studded with observations enforcing the same point. Arriving at Newcastle in 1755, "he did not find things there in the order he expected;" and subjoins the reason for this state of affairs immediately after; "Many were on the point of leaving the Church which some had done already; and, as they suppose, on my authority! O! how much discord is caused by one jarring string." In 1757 he preached at a little village called Normanby, and in the evening, he was much pleased on talking with the society, to witness "the care of God over them that fear him." It appears that hitherto their spiritual progress had been but slow and unpromising, for he puts the interrogatory "What was it that stopped their growing in grace?" and thus answers it; "Why they had a well-meaning preacher among them, who was inflaming them more

and more against the clergy; nor could he advise them to attend the public ordinances, for he never went either to church or sacrament himself. This I knew not, but God did; and by his wise providence prevented the consequences which would naturally have ensued. William Manuel [the preacher] was pressed for a soldier, so the people go to church and sacrament as before." From this instance alone does it not most plainly and unquestionably appear that Wesley considered conformity to the Church as the very groundwork, the very vital principle of Methodism? On another occasion, and at another place, when he "met the classes he was agreeably surprised to find that the bitterness against the Church, with which many were infected when he was there before, was now entirely over;" yet he could not fail to remark on the evil which this temporary alienation had wrought, for he adds, "yet the deadness it had occasioned remained, and I doubt it will not soon be removed." Of his meeting "in a little conference," with ten of his brethren, at the city of Limerick in 1760, he thus writes in a spirit of thankfulness and rejoicing; "By the blessing of God we were all of one mind, particularly with regard to the Church—even J. D. has not now the least thought of leaving it, but attends there, be the minister good or bad." The societies that caused him the most trouble were those which were remiss in their attendance at Church. Addressing his people at Norwich in 1763, he told them, among other matters, that "he would immediately put a stop to preaching in the time of church service," and added "For many years I have had more trouble with this society than with half the societies in England put together;" the consequence, as we are left to infer of their neglecting the ordinances of the Establishment, and of their "preaching in the time of church service." In 1766 he "preached at Bingley, but with a heavy heart, finding so many of the Methodists there, as well as at Haworth, perverted by the

Anabaptists." And thus does he account for this defection: "I see clearer and clearer none will keep to us, unless they keep to the Church. Whoever separate from the Church will separate from the Methodists." And not only does he enjoin his people to attend Church as the surest means of promoting the growth of Methodism, but he warns them of the "sinfulness and foolishness of railing at the clergy," and corroborates his admonition by the example of a place where "there was a general love to the Gospel, till simple R. W. preached against the clergy." Other instances remain to be cited from the conclusion of his Journal. When he visited Brentford in 1786, he "had little comfort there:" "the society," he declares, "is almost dwindled to nothing. What have we gained by separating from the Church here? Is not this a good lesson for others?" Let us go with him to Deptford in 1787, and witness the scene which he has described to the very life; "I went over to Deptford; but it seemed I was got into a den of lions. Most of the leading men of the society were mad for separating from the Church. I endeavoured to reason with them, but in vain; they had neither sense nor even good manners left. At length, after meeting the whole society, I told them, 'If you are resolved, you may have your service in church hours; but remember, from that time you will see my face no more.' This struck deep, and from that hour I have heard no more of separating from the Church." From a remark made by him on the termination of the Irish Conference in 1789, we learn that, as the Methodists dwindled to nothing when they ceased to be Churchmen, so they grew strong and multiplied, as long as they stood faithful to the Church. His words are these; "I never saw such a number of preachers before, so unanimous in all points, particularly as to leaving the Church, which none of them had the least thought of. *It is no wonder that there has been this year so large an increase of the society.*"

Wesley, with all his enthusiasm, was endowed with strong common sense, and with that sagacity which can penetrate into futurity, and foretell the result of important measures, requiring for their development the lapse of generations or even centuries. So far as time has tested the mere policy of his exhortation to his followers,—"Let us keep to the Church,"—I believe I may assert with the utmost safety, that every year since his death has more and more confirmed the wisdom which dictated it, and brought about the consequences which he predicted would flow from its observance or neglect. In corroboration of this I will adduce a particular and very striking instance. Mr. Osler, a writer of the present day, favourably known by his Life of *Lord Exmouth*, has bestowed much attention on the religious aspect of the times, and has written a work, under the title of *Church and King*, in which he enters into an analysis of the machinery of Methodism. He considers that Methodism is opposed to the principles of Democracy and Dissent, and that so long as the Wesleyans maintain the original principle of their Society by keeping close to the Church, and respecting the Clergy of the Establishment, they will never dispute the authority of their own preachers. "I expressed this opinion," he goes on to say, "last year to a superintendent, of much observation and sound judgment. 'I can confirm your remark,' he replied, 'by examples within this circuit. In the next parish, we have a society of about sixty members, who regularly attend their parish church, and receive the Sacrament there. They are united among themselves, and give their preachers no trouble. At ———, we have a society who never go to church, and their conduct is altogether as disorderly. I told them, but the last time I was there, that if they would go to church whenever it is open, they would learn to behave better in their own place of worship.'" Here do we find ample confirmation of the justice of Wesley's remarks more immedi-

ately occasioned by the conduct of the Methodists of Bingley and Haworth, but applicable as a general rule,—"I see clearer and clearer none will keep to us, unless they keep to the Church"! Here do we find the preacher using almost the very words of Wesley at Norwich, at all events speaking in their spirit,—"For many years I have had more trouble with this society than with half the societies in England put together."

It was not however on the low ground of worldly expediency, and with the ultimate view of forming a large party in the church, and then by degrees weaning them from it, and erecting a separate and independent sect, that Wesley lived and died a Churchman, and exhorted all his followers to do the same. He was a Churchman, because his conscience told him that it was his duty to remain one,—because he DARED NOT to be otherwise. "Are we not Dissenters?"—is a question proposed by him, and thus answered; "No; we are not dissenters in the only sense which our law acknowledges, namely, those who renounce the service of the Church. We do not—we DARE NOT separate from it." In another part of his writings he grapples with the objection that had been urged by some, that, until the Methodists separated, they could not expect to be a compact united body,—"It is true we cannot till then be *a compact united body*, if you mean by that expression a body distinct from all others. AND WE HAVE NO DESIRE SO TO BE."

Thus frequently and thus explicitly did John Wesley declare his mind against a separation from the Church of England. True it is that "in a course of years, *out of necessity, not choice*, [he] slowly and warily varied [from it] in some points of discipline"; but still not to such an extent as to make the slightest alteration in the *principle* of his attachment to the Church. To the last moment of his long and righteous life he adhered most strictly to the rules which,

with an impressive plainness, he had laid down for the guidance of his people, and which are to be found in the larger Minutes of Conference published in 1770; "Warn them,"—he is addressing the Assistant Preachers,—"against calling our society the *Church*, against calling our preachers *ministers*, our houses *meeting-houses;* call them plain *preaching-houses* or *chapels*." Love to the Church, as being the purest fountain of divine truth, and the most faithful expounder of the lively oracles of God, was his ruling passion from youth to manhood and from manhood to old age—it coloured all his thoughts, it influenced all his actions, it was breathed in the last faint murmur of his dying lips. It was no fitful fire that danced before his eyes for a moment, then disappeared, then returned, and then disappeared again. No,—it was a bright and steady effulgence that never lacked oil to feed its sacred flame. It was to perpetuate this feeling among his followers that his life, as he believed, was prolonged to such an unusual duration: "I believe one reason why God is pleased to continue my life so long, is to confirm them in their present purpose, not to separate from the Church."

In December 1789 when death was already hovering over him, meditating the fatal blow, he wrote a paper, entitled, *Further Thoughts on Separation from the Church*, which concludes thus: "And this [his determination of adhering to the Church] is in no way contrary to the profession which I have made above these fifty years. I never had any design of separating from the Church; I have no such design now." Then carrying his thoughts onward beyond his own mortal pilgrimage, which he was fully aware was hastening to a close,—"I do not believe the Methodists in general design it, when I am no more seen. I do, and will do, all that is in my power to prevent such an event. Nevertheless, in spite of all that I can do, many of them will separate from it, (although, I am apt to think, not one half,

perhaps not one-third of them.) These will be so bold and injudicious as to form a separate party, which, consequently, will dwindle away into a dry, dull, separate party. In flat opposition to these, I declare once more that I LIVE AND DIE A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND; AND THAT NONE WHO REGARD MY JUDGMENT OR ADVICE WILL EVER SEPARATE FROM IT." These sentiments, be it remembered, he did not entertain for the first time when his vital spark was "glimmering in its socket";—they had been a lamp to lighten his feet throughout his whole life. "These last solemn words," says one who knew him, "*were the result of long consideration and uniform conviction.* I solemnly aver that in the year 1777, or 1778, I asked him the question—'Sir, in case the Methodists should, after your death, leave the Church of England, what would you advise your friends to do?' He answered immediately—'I would advise them to adhere to the Church, and quit the Methodists; but,' added he, 'that will never be necessary; for if some quit the Church, others will adhere to it, and then there will be Dissenting Methodists andChurch Methodists.'" "His usual form of grace, after a meal, was this:—'We thank thee, O Lord, for these and all thy mercies; bless the CHURCH and King; grant us truth and peace through Jesus Christ our Lord.' And in these words, not many hours before his death, on having his parched lips moistened by an attendant, he gave audible expression to his feelings. The last blessing which he seems to have distinctly invoked was for the Church and the King." Faithfully indeed, in his own conviction, did John Wesley act up to his declaration, "I LIVE AND DIE A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND."

Lest however it should be supposed that Wesley only reverenced the Church in its spiritual character, and disapproved of its Episcopal form of government, and its connexion with the State,—I will borrow a paragraph from a work styled '*The Church and the Methodists,*' published in the

year 1834, in conformity with a Resolution of the Conference, and written by the Reverend Thomas Jackson, the recently-elected President, if I mistake not, of the English Conference for the ensuing year:—"One of his (Mr. W's) correspondents had said, 'There is an ecclesiastical order established in England, and it is a lawful one;' to which he answers, 'I believe it is in general NOT ONLY LAWFUL BUT HIGHLY COMMENDABLE.' As if he intended to refute the idle plea, that he was friendly to the Church of England as a part of the universal church of Christ, but denounced its union with the state, he says in his 'Letter to the printer of the Dublin Chronicle,' written only about eighteen months before his death, 'Unless I see more reason for it than I ever yet saw, I will not leave the Church of England, AS BY LAW ESTABLISHED, while the breath of God is in my nostrils.'

There is another remark, also, possessing a peculiarly local and present interest, which I must not here omit to make, and which I base in part on the authority of Mr. Osler: "Mr. Wesley declares, from personal observation, that very many years before the revolt of the North American Colonies, there was a disposition to throw off their dependence upon England, founded, not upon any alleged grievance, but upon the feeling of repulsion which necessarily exists against a Monarchy, wherever the system of Independency in religion prevails." Coupling *this* declaration of Mr. Wesley, with *that* contained in the minutes of 1770,—"What they do in America, or what their minutes say, is nothing to us; we will keep in the *good old way*,"—we may fairly infer that in his opinion the tendency perceptible in the Colonial Methodists of 1770 to separate from the Church, was a tendency favourable to Independency, and consequently hostile to monarchy, and the maintenance of British connexion.

Did space permit, I would here proceed to prove, that

from the death of Wesley unto the present period his TRUE followers, "both at home and abroad," have "lived and died members of the Church of England;" and particularly would I show, at some length, how strong was the affection borne towards the Church by Wesley's devoted and trusted friend, the venerable, pious, and learned Adam Clarke. These subjects, however, I must reserve for another opportunity. In the mean while I trust that the words of John Wesley may be duly considered both by Churchman and by Methodist—that they may induce the Churchman to look upon the Methodist as a brother,—and that they may strongly impress upon the mind of the *Wesleyan* Methodist, that he is not entitled to bear that appellation, unless, like the father and founder of Methodism, he lives and dies a member of the Church of England as by law established.

If any reverence be still paid to the warnings, the precepts, the exhortations, and the dying declaration of John Wesley among those who have assumed his name as a religious designation,—those feelings of affection and reverence which he so strongly entertained towards the Church must still be cherished in the Province of Upper Canada, whither so many of his followers have repaired from the troubled scenes of Ireland, or from his own native England. I am convinced that it is only for want of a better understanding of the principles of Wesley that so little cordiality exists between Churchmen and Wesleyans in this Province. By the press alone can these principles be fully disseminated. The true British Wesleyan Methodist is born with them, and needs not to be reminded of them. But the Canadian-born Methodist I am afraid, in too many instances, is as ignorant as almost every Churchman, of the views and feelings of Wesley in reference to the Church. Under this impression I offer these remarks; and if the words of the excellent man, of which they chiefly consist, could be conveyed to all those who rejoice in his name, and borrow their desig-

nation from it, it would not be long before the Wesleyan Methodists of Upper Canada would imitate the example of their English and Irish Brethren, and hasten to the succour of their persecuted mother the Church,—it would not be very long before we should hear them addressing Bishop Mountain in the very language of the Methodists of New South Wales, when congratulating Dr. Broughton, on his appointment to the Bishopric of Australia in the year 1836:

"We, the undersigned, Ministers and Members of the *Societies* and *Congregations* in New South Wales, of the people called Methodists, late in connexion with the Rev John Wesley, A. M.; sometime fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, deceased, beg to present to your Lordship our most respectful congratulations on your Lordship's safe return to the shores of Australia, and *especially to express our grateful appreciation of the councils of His Majesty's Government, in having erected these important colonies into a separate diocese*, and in having placed at its head a Clergyman so intimately acquainted with the character and circumstances of the people, and so zealously concerned for their spiritual welfare, as the experience of several years has proved your Lordship to be. FIRMLY AND CONSCIENTIOUSLY ATTACHED AS A BODY TO THE UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND, AS BY LAW ESTABLISHED, WE CANNOT BUT REJOICE IN EVERY MEASURE WHICH PROMISES TO EXTEND THE USEFULNESS AND TO INCREASE THE PROSPERITY OF THAT VENERABLE HIERARCHY.—TAUGHT BY THE EXAMPLE OF OUR REVEREND FOUNDER, BY THE OFT-REPEATED DECLARATION OF OUR PARENT CONNEXION IN ANNUAL CONFERENCE ASSEMBLED, NOT LESS THAN BY OUR OWN HONEST CONVICTION THAT THAT CHURCH HAS BEEN THE INSTRUMENT IN THE HANDS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE OF PRESERVING TO THE BRITISH REALMS THE BLESSINGS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY, AND OF SPREADING FAR AND WIDE THE PURE DOCTRINES OF OUR MOST HOLY FAITH, *we feel bound to tender to your Lordship in these* CRITICAL TIMES *the assurance that we shall ever pray*

that your Lordship may be enabled so to discharge the duties of your sacred and most responsible office, as that your already extensive and rapidly extending See may become distinguished for the purity and undefiledness of its religion, for the firmness of its loyalty to our most Gracious Sovereign, and for all the virtues and happiness of a divinely favoured and highly prosperous colony."

This is an emanation of brotherly love and Christian friendship such as Wesley himself would have exulted to hear! When the Methodists in Upper Canada can express such sentiments as these,—(and the Bishop of Montreal is a prelate whose zeal, piety and meekness, might justly call them forth,)—then will they be *Wesleyans* not only in name, but in deed. Then will they be enabled to say in the language of their founder, with an approving conscience;—"We are not dissenters." "We do not, will not, form any separate sect, but from principle remain what we always have been,— true members of the Church of England." "We do not—we dare not separate from it." Then,—if the departed spirits of just men made perfect are permitted to interest themselves in the welfare of those, to whose service they devoted their lives,—then will the heavenly essence of John Wesley rejoice at beholding his followers dwelling together in unity with that Church, in the bosom and from the lessons of which he was taught the way that conducted him to salvation and bliss.

J. K.

Cobourg, 13th October, 1838.

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